

## A Family Alone – Chapter 13 – A Second Shelter

“I used the patterns I got from Utah Shelter Systems. All of the hardware came from them. I put in bunks because I don’t believe we’re in any danger from direct blast effects. They claim the shelter is big enough for 50 people, but I wouldn’t want to try it.”

“I noticed you only have 4 bunks. How much did it cost you to put the shelter in?”

“I don’t really remember maybe a few thousand for the culvert and about six thousand at USS. I welded on my own end plates and installed my own floor. Of course the batteries were expensive. I didn’t follow all of their recommendations. They suggested not using propane, but I put in a propane stove and propane refrigerator with extra venting and extra blast valves.”

“Hmm. Would there be room for Avis and I to construct a shelter?”

“Yes, of course. It would have to be at least 10’ away from ours, but we could connect the two with a 6’ oval corrugated pipe. What do you have in mind?”

“Something about the size of yours. If I got the materials, would you be interested in helping me finish it?”

“I can do the welding and give advice.”

“I’ll talk to Avis about it. We were thinking about putting a shelter in the backyard, but if Fresno were hit, it might all be over before it started. Would I need a generator too?”

“No. Ours is 15kw, like I told you. The shelter is mostly 12vdc. When we had an electric hot plate I used a heavy-duty inverter. I probably should have put a freezer in the shelter, but at the time, it didn’t occur to me. It’s in the basement and is secure.

“Do you think that there is much chance of a war?”

“Probably not. You never know with those Iranians, however. It doesn’t matter, so long as your shelter is built to the same specs as ours.”

“I might put a freezer in ours. Not a big one, but something large enough to store some meat and veggies. I don’t see us running out here every week to get food. We probably rotate the food on a monthly basis. Do you shop at Costco too?”

“There, Wal-Mart and Sam’s Club. We store some bulk items in 6-gallon pails with oxygen absorbers we get from a place in Idaho. They sell long-term storage foods, if you’re interested.”

“Walton Feed? We’ve been buying from them for a long time. We have enough of their deluxe 1-year survival food deals to feed the family for a year.”

“Most people would think we’re crazy.”

“April and you or the 4 of us?”

“Both. Either. There are a lot of sheeple in California.”

“The People’s Republic? It wasn’t always that way you know.”

“When did it change?”

“It started in the 1930s. Then when Prop 13 came along in ‘73, everything went to hell in a handcart.”

“Are you going to wait until next spring to do your shelter? We’d only have about 6 weeks to get it closed in before it snows.”

“If you can make a list of what I need, I think we could start immediately. But only if you’re sure it wouldn’t be a problem with our having a shelter on your property.”

“I have everything associated with the construction of our shelter in a file folder in my desk. After we eat, we can pull the folder and make you a list.”

◦

“What was that all about?”

“April, Dean and Avis are going to put in a shelter next to ours. I dug out the file folder and showed him what he would need.”

“That should cheer Sam up. If Garry’s family has a shelter next to ours, maybe she’ll relax a little. We need to take Rob shopping; he’s out of his clothes again.”

“Buy them big, maybe they’ll last longer.”

“I do. He’s almost full-grown now. You’ll be taking him for his driver’s exam after Thanksgiving. Do you think we need to think about getting the kids vehicles?”

“Not before they have full driver’s licenses. Sam will be 18 in January. I suppose we could look for something for her.”

“We probably ought to look for a good used diesel pickup. If she gets going on the Watkins business, she’ll need a delivery truck.”

“I could buy a new truck and give her mine.”

“The new models are out; do you want to go shopping?”

◦

“What made you buy a flame red pickup?”

“The price was right. I’ll call tomorrow and make an appointment to have the fuel tank and the winch installed. Either Sam has to get a ham license or we’ll have to pull the Kenwood.”

“I’ll get both Rob and her started studying for the exam. How about when Rob is old enough, we give him my pickup and buy me a new one?”

“I suppose. Yours should be broken in by then. Let’s talk about the Owens some more. Are you really ok with them putting in a shelter?”

“If they did, it wouldn’t be so crowded in our shelter if we ever needed to use it. Did I hear you and Dean talking about horses?”

“They have 4. He said that the place they boarded them raised the rates and he was looking for a new place. I thought it would give Rob a chance to earn some money. It only costs about \$25 a month to feed a horse, at least when you buy in bulk. So Rob would get an extra \$100 a month for his savings account. It wouldn’t take him much longer, but if he doesn’t want to do it, I’ll do it.”

“The lowest boarding rates are about \$75. Perhaps you should charge him \$60 a head. He’d still be money ahead, wouldn’t he?”

“I didn’t give him a firm price April. I just told him about half. I’ll suggest \$60, but if he won’t go for it, it will have to be \$50.”

“You had better talk to Rob about it too. He’ll be the one doing the work.”

◦

“Rob, the Owens’ have 4 horses and are looking for a place to board them. We have 4 extra stalls and I was wondering if you’d be interested in picking up a little extra money.”

“Feeding, grooming, like that?”

“Whatever boarding would entail. You could keep the money in excess of the cost of the feed. April and I talked it over and she suggested maybe \$60 a month. Feed costs about \$25 a head so you’d be clearing about \$140 a month.”

“Dad, that’s fine, but I have a question. What am I going to do when I graduate from high school? Garry is learning diesel engine mechanics at his high school.”

“What do you want to do?”

“Maybe a Deputy Sheriff?”

“Have you looked into it?”

“I think I’d be better off with 2 years of junior college first.”

“You might want to talk to that Detective, Deputy Martin.”

“Ok, next time we get to Madera.”

“Call him and make an appointment, I’ll drive you in.”

“Sure, anytime?”

“Whenever he has the time.”

◦

“Actually what we could use the most of at the moment is candidates for our Tactical Medical Response Team. I could set you up to talk with Deputy Dan Jackson, if you want. He started the program when he was a Reserve Deputy in 1993. I can tell you that tactical medics are specially trained health care providers (physicians, nurses, paramedics and EMT’s) that provide care to tactical law-enforcement teams. Most of the time, these “medics” are employed or affiliated with a public service agency. For example, city fire department paramedics providing support to the city police SWAT team, a private ambulance company that provides paramedics to the Sheriff’s Department’s SWAT team through a mutual agreement or a law enforcement agency that has its own medics (some federal and state agencies).”

“Thank you, I’d appreciate that Detective.”

“Are you still fostered by the Henson’s?”

“We’re adopted. They’re our parents now.”

“Good. Let me call Dan and see if he has time to see you now.”

◦

“Rob, there are several different training programs offered throughout the state. The Counter Narcotics Tactical Operations Medical Support (CONTOMS) course travels around the United States throughout the year. This is an excellent school and very reasonably priced. The Specialized Tactical Medical Training Program is offered at the

H&K International Training Center. This organization has a long history of providing excellent tactical training to law-enforcement personnel. You need to complete Paramedic training first. Then, if we have a vacancy, we could bring you aboard and you could get your law enforcement training. The H&K classes cost about \$1,000 each. It's a long tough road to hoe."

"Where would I get Paramedic training?"

"You could go to the Fresno City College Training Institute. You'd need to attend EMT-B training and get some experience. Then you could attend the police academy and take paramedic training. It would probably take you about 4 years, all together. First you have to finish high school."

"Thanks for the information. I'll look into Fresno City College."

o

"What did you learn, Rob?"

"They have opportunities for people who are paramedics and have been through the police academy at Fresno City College. It would take me about 4 years, all together."

"That's a substantial time commitment. If that's what you think you want to do, your mom and I will help anyway we can."

"I'll need to see some people at the college someday when we're in Fresno. No rush, I have to finish high school first. I think I'll take care of Mr. Owens' horses for now."

"If you want to, I can teach you to weld. The Owens' family is going to put in a shelter next to ours."

"Neat. Ok, you can teach me, I'd like to learn how to weld."

o

Dean Owens had a contractor on the acreage on the following Tuesday putting in the hole for the shelter. The contractor also excavated a trench for the 6' tunnel to one end of Tom and April's shelter. Dean had a man cut a hole for the connecting tunnel into the plate that Tom had welded to one end of his and April's shelter. The hole was finished on Thursday and the corrugated culvert delivered and set in place with a crane on Friday. The heavy  $\frac{3}{8}$ " metal end caps were also delivered and set in place by the crane and Tom tack welded them in place after Dean had several things, like a freezer, etc. set inside.

## A Family Alone – Chapter 14 – A Very Busy Fall

A freight company delivered the LUWA system and the things Dean had ordered from USS the following week. And on Tuesday of the same week the horses arrived for Rob to start taking care of. It appeared that when Dean Owens decided to do something, he was all business. The freezer was a new freezer from Costco, still in its shipping box. It took about 20 yards of crushed rock for the lower portion of the shelter. In case anyone is wondering the circumference of the shelter is 31.4' and there were 2 end plates or about 63' feet of welding, more than enough for Tom to teach Rob welding. There were also the entrance and exit tunnels to weld into place plus the connecting oval tunnel. By the time everything was welded in place using Tom's Mig welder, Rob was somewhat accomplished.

It took until the first snowfall to get the Owens' shelter finished, the tunnel installed and backfill the hole. Dean Owens moved his survival food and even a gun safe. He filled the freezer with repacked meat from Costco. The only thing that Dean had that Tom and April didn't was radiation equipment from Radmeters4U. Tom got the address from Dean and bought the package deal and extra potassium iodide and dosimeters. Dean had one of those CD V-717s and Tom figured the radiation level wouldn't be any different 10' away and bought a CD V-700 instead.

The horse boarding was working out well for Rob. It also gave Garry an excuse to visit with Sam. They were in their senior year at school and were thicker than thieves. It was all very proper, but the handholding had Rob laughing most of the time. Sam was now comfortable with the idea of waiting a year after they graduated to get married. Perhaps she was counting the money she might earn during that year and all of the things she could buy with it.

On one occasion when Dean came out to rotate the meat in the shelter, Tom went along and Dean showed him what he had in his gun safe. He basically had everything Tom had, in threes. The other set was kept at home, he explained. Dean didn't have the Russian shotguns – he had the Italian SPAS-15s. He had M1As, M16A3, M1911s and Ruger 10/22 rifles. He had more ammo than Tom and none of the 12-gauge was Tactical ammo. It was 2<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>", but 12 pellet 00 Buck and Brenneke slugs.

Like Tom and April, Dean and Avis packed their meat in vacuum bags with the date noted. The upright freezer was only about half full, making it easier for Dean to rotate the food. He said that Tom and April could add food from their freezer if TSHTF, not that he expected it to. The winter of 2009-2010 was worse than usual and a couple of months Dean didn't make it to the acreage. Tom and April lost power a few times but there was enough energy stored in their batteries that the generator never even kicked in. It was so bad that the teacher from school wasn't even able to make regular home visits putting Sam and Rob in the position of taking several tests at once.

One would have thought the world ended when Garry wasn't able to make his regular visits and they had to skip Church 2 Sundays in a row because of the roads. Sam was

beside herself; isn't love grand? Sam and Rob no longer talked about their natural mother. They hadn't brought up their father since Tom had been forced to kill him, a fact that still bothered Tom. The man had said he had a gun and where is it written that you have to let the other guy shoot first? It was probably the fact that the guy was bluffing and Tom had been forced to use a throw down that bothered him more than anything. And all these years later Detective Martian still thought about that shooting. There was something about it that bothered him, but he couldn't put his finger on it. "Mr. Henson, the Deputy retrieved a revolver from the man you shot." BTW: Robert Blake had gunshot residue on his shoes.

It was finally graduation day for Samantha and Garry's class. Sam was rather surprised when Garry didn't ask her to marry him after her graduation. She fretted but that didn't change the fact that he hadn't asked. The following day, after Garry's graduation ceremony, he proposed. He even had the obligatory diamond engagement ring. They set their wedding date for a year to the day from when Garry proposed, Sam had only agreed to wait one year. Thank God 2010 and 2011 weren't leap years; the extra day would have surely killed her.

o

But wait, this story started in the late 1990s and we're into the second decade of the new century without any unknown disaster. No one in the Fresno area was hurt by the temblor on the San Andreas. And here we are with 2 10'x60' shelters, connected no less. Oh well it isn't time – yet. China by now has probably bought all of the Backfire C bombers that India couldn't afford. There is no rule that says that just because you're prepared something has to happen. On the other hand I believe there is a rule that says if you aren't, the crap will hit the fan. After Oklahoma City, I thought we'd seen the end of terrorists in the United States. Dumb me. Did you know that the US government shot down Flight 93 with a ray gun of some kind on 9/11? I read that on the Internet, so it must be true.

o

"I thought maybe you would like to start a Watkins business in Fresno, Sam. Tom had the same idea."

"Would I be cutting into your sales?"

"No, I'd be your distributor, so I still make a little. I could get you all set up with fresh products about the time the two of you get married."

"I suppose we could set a bedroom aside to store an inventory."

"You won't have that much. I'm only 35 miles away and rather than keep a lot on hand, you could call me if you ran short or come out here. Are you getting along with Tom's old pickup ok?"

“Is that why you gave me a pickup rather than a car? So I could deliver Watkins products?”

“I assumed that you might set up your own website. You can use ours as a pattern and just change the name and address information. You don’t have to sell Watkins if you don’t want to. Or if you do, it can be as fulltime or part-time as you’d like.”

“If you want to take my orders when I’m fat and pregnant, I guess it would work out.”

“Have Garry and you talked about how many children you’d like to have?”

“We’ll start off with one or two and go from there. I don’t want more than one child in diapers at a time.”

“That might be a good idea. Learn from the first and apply what you learn to the second. Have you looked at dresses yet?”

“I looked in Penny’s; they have a nice wedding shop. I don’t want to spend a lot of money on a dress I’m only going to wear one time. Garry’s new job is working out well. He’s taken some extra classes at Fresno City College and might get a raise soon.”

“Saving a lot of money is he?”

“His parents aren’t charging him rent so the only expense he has is gas for his pickup.”

“Tell him to take gas out of our tank. We need to use the gas, we don’t have anything that takes gasoline anymore and once the tank is empty, we’re going to refill it with diesel. Dean’s vehicle is also diesel and if they ended up here in the shelter, he’d be better served if we had all of the compartments filled with diesel.”

“Do you still think that someday we’re going to have a disaster, mom?”

“I hope not, but Tom and I have been prepared for almost 15 years. Gas prices could shoot off the scale. We’ve had enough power outages over the years to pay for that generator just in the event we didn’t lose. The horses are to ride, but they’re also an alternate form of transportation. Not that I’d look forward to riding all of the way to Fresno, but we have them for fun and possible need. I suspect that Tom will give you all of the weapons he has for you that he hasn’t specifically given to you. Dean will probably do the same thing for Garry, once you’re married.”

“Dad’s really the gun nut, isn’t he?”

“Better to have them and not need them than to not have them and to need them. That’s why we taught you and Rob to shoot. A gun isn’t any good to you if you need it and don’t know how to use it. I think that Tom plans to give you his Fort Knox gun safe.”



“What is he going to use?”

“What he always used before he got the gun safe, a locking office cabinet. It was only important to have a gun safe when there were youngsters around. He’s already moved most of our guns to the cabinet in the shelter. The only guns he has in the safe at the moment are yours and Rob’s.”

“Why didn’t Dad get everyone get a fancy rifle. You know, like a M1A match rifle?”

“Tom could never shoot that well. He never bought a firearm that he couldn’t get the full benefit of. He’s straining to shoot 500-yards with the Super Match. It’s like we taught you, the handgun is your up-close weapon, the shotgun is your mid-range weapon, the assault rifle is good for 100-300 yards and the battle rifle to 500-yards. Now whether you choose to use the Vaquero or the Colt Commander is up to you. The Commander is a lot faster to reload. The .45 Colts are mainly for when you’re riding.”

“How much food should we keep on hand?”

“I don’t think that you would want to keep more than a month’s extra food. If there’s a problem, we expect Garry and you to come here. If you have too much, it will be a problem moving it.”

“What about a standby generator?”

“We’re going to give you our portable. We don’t really use it much anymore and you can mount it in the back of the pickup where Tom had the mounting brackets. All you need is an extension cord and we have plenty of those.”

“What about my bedroom furniture?”

“Would you like to take it with you to have furniture for a spare bedroom?”

“If we have the room, yes.”

“Ok, after you get a permanent place, you can haul it to town.”

o

“What are you studying, Rob?”

“Biology, Dad.”

“That will be an important subject if you’re going to be a Paramedic.”

“It seems like it takes forever. First I have the EMT-B training then a year on an ambulance or something. After that, it Paramedic training and finally the Police Academy.”

“You’re going to have people lives in your hands and whether you become a Fireman Paramedic or a Sheriff’s Paramedic that will never change.”

“I don’t want to be a fireman. I don’t really like fires. They’re dangerous.”

“So are firearms. A Fireman probably has it safer than a Deputy Sheriff. What made you want to be a Deputy anyway?”

“Abused children. What happened to Sam and me wasn’t right. I might not be able to make a difference, but I sure can try. That was why I was interested in the Madera Sheriff’s Department; they have that Child Safety and Protection Program. No one should have been put in the position you were put in.”

“What do you mean?”

“My dad didn’t have a gun. He was scared to death of them. He just said that to scare you away. You did what you had to do and protected us. But you were really in a spot. I saw you out of my window put the gun in his hand and fire that shot. You didn’t have any choice and you didn’t know that he didn’t have a gun. What happened that you shot without warning him?”

“Military training, Rob. It’s not so much shooting first and asking questions after, but when someone tells you he has a gun, instinct sometimes takes over. You dad was in a shadow and I couldn’t really see. Champ was pulling on his leash and I couldn’t aim my flashlight. So, I took him at his word and shot center mass, just as I was trained. Then when I saw that he didn’t have I gun, I took an old revolver that I won in a poker game in 1994 and put it in his hand and fired off a round. I probably shouldn’t have done that, but all I could think of was not being around for April, Sam and you.”

“I’ll never tell anyone, you know that don’t you?”

“I really wouldn’t be looking going to prison but once I did that stupid thing I lost whatever credibility I had.”

“Sam knew about dad too. They didn’t question me, only her. She backed you 100%. Who was I to say any differently?”

“Considering your age at the time, that was a carefully reasoned decision.”

“No it wasn’t, I didn’t want to end up in another foster home that might or might not have been as good as the home we were. I was just being selfish.”

## A Family Alone – Chapter 15 – June Wedding

Garry and Samantha started looking for an apartment in April. They didn't know how long it would take to find something decent and didn't want to put it off until the last moment. The closer they got to the wedding, the more things they had to arrange. They found a nice 2-bedroom in a good neighborhood that was being vacated at the end of May. The manager said the apartment would be cleaned and have a new coat of paint. The carpet would be shampooed or replaced as required, probably shampooed. They filled out the application and plunked down the deposit. They wouldn't need to pay first and last until they moved in. It was the typical deal, first and last month and a security deposit equal to a third month's rent.

Samantha already had her dress and the final fitting was scheduled in May, just in case any final alterations were required. Garry asked Rob to be his Best Man and Sam asked Garry's sister, Shelly, who was only a year younger than she to be the Maid of Honor. Sam was sort of stuck on whom she could ask; she hadn't attended regular high school and made lots of friend. Garry didn't have that problem, but they were planning on a small ceremony with only family in attendance. They were going to be married at Grace Lutheran. Since the kids were long time attendees and had joined the Church, the Pastor had an entirely different idea. He pigeonholed Dean, Avis, Tom and April and suggested that they have a Reception in the Church facility and the Ladies Auxiliary handle the luncheon.

Image the kids' surprise when half the church showed up for the wedding, the Pastor had been busy. Tom and April were paying for the reception and the Church Ladies gave them the best price they could. Most of the food was donated and the small amount they cleared on the Reception was going to a worthy cause. It ended taking 2 pickups to haul all of the gifts to the apartment after the reception. Samantha hadn't had invitations or thank you cards printed, so April made a run while the kids were on their honeymoon in San Francisco and picked up a large stack of thank you cards from a Hallmark shop.

Dean slipped Garry an envelope in addition to the wedding gift. He covered the cost of the hotel and food for their Honeymoon, and a little extra (the envelope contained 25 \$100 bills). Garry and Sam were going to stay at the Hotel Triton across from the entrance to China Town. It was about \$140 a day plus tax. Not the most expensive hotel by far. However, the hotel had a reputation for its interesting decorating scheme (I always stay there and you may spell interesting-weird-and-free-wine-every-night). The adjacent restaurant – Aioli-Cafe de La Presse – has a very good, moderately priced menu (Mediterranean 7/10). The same owners have a very good steakhouse about a block away. They visited Ghirardelli Square, Fisherman's Wharf, Pier 39, the Cable Cars, Chinatown, Cliff House and Coit Tower. They didn't mind when it rained, either.

When they got back, Sam told April that they were leaving the bedroom furniture until later. They did take the rest of Sam's clothes, the gun safe and the Watkins products. Rather than 2 websites, April's website now listed 2 locations and 2 phone numbers.

That worked out better because April's Fresno customers called the Fresno number and most everyone else called the old number or simply bought off the website. Sam had a thriving business in no time and without Sam to help, April had all she could handle, occasionally drafting Rob. Tom still delivered the orders to UPS. Not long after they returned from their honeymoon it occurred to Sam that she was late. When she missed twice she went to the doctor and confirmed the obvious, she and Garry were expecting.

"Already? That was quick."

"Well, it rained a lot when we were on our honeymoon."

"Congratulations honey. You seem to have a fair amount of Watkins business."

"You are going to take it over when I can't handle it aren't you?"

"I said I would. It will only be temporary and you'll still have your profits. I still get my small percentage so it's no big deal."

"It sure is to us. We're saving for a house. Garry's boss gave him the raise too, so we might be able to get into a house a little sooner."

"Did you get all of the thank you cards sent?"

"Yes and we did the gift exchanges, we don't really need 3 toasters."

"It seems to always happen that way. That's why the sellers give you a special gift receipt. It doesn't show the price, but once you pick out something different, you know. Do you have a good doctor?"

"I just used the one we've always used. He did say something about an ultrasound and possibly an amniocentesis later on."

"The ultrasound is probably a normal procedure under certain circumstances, but you won't have an amniocentesis unless he finds something wrong in the ultrasound. He may not even do the ultrasound unless there are any risk factors. I'll bet he was simply warning you of possibilities, and not defining tests he will run."

"Why couldn't you have children?"

"Fell off a horse when I was about 13 and injured myself. But, it worked out because we got you and Rob. You have Tom to thank for that, we'd given up trying to adopt and then he suggested possibly adopting older children. A couple of months later, the two of you were here."

“I’m sorry about my dad. I think that it still bothers Tom. My dad was such a dork, but he was my dad, right up until he began laying his hands on me. Then he became just another piece of crap drunk. Sorry for cussing.”

“It does bother Tom, but he tries not to show it. The thing about it was that the .45 went off first and the .38 second.”

“I thought so, but I wasn’t going to say anything. My dad was afraid of guns. I think that Rob has known all along exactly what happened. We should just forget about it, it’s over and done with. Sometimes I wonder about my birth mother, but she made her bed. It wasn’t like she couldn’t protect us. She was just more interested in not being around.”

◦

As it turned out Detective Martin was scheduled to retire. He didn’t like loose ends and that shooting had always bothered him. He started digging out records that they hadn’t examined before. He discovered that the deceased had more than one conviction for child abuse; apparently he’d been married before. He also learned that the man had a medically identified phobia, of guns. He stopped looking and put the files away. A month later he retired. He attended Sam and Garry’s wedding. Sam was a beautiful bride and quite the young woman. He said hi during the reception to Sam and Garry and even had a nice wedding gift for them, a toaster. Sam only vaguely remembered the face so she said hi back and promptly forgot about it. She assumed that it was probably someone Garry knew. It was when she was making out the thank you cards that she put 2 and 2 together. She didn’t say anything to Tom or April.

Martin figured that 98% of what Tom told him was true. The other witness statements bore it out. He assumed rightly that the man had threatened Tom with a gun he didn’t have and when Tom had defended himself, he learned the awful truth. So Tom must have used a throw down. The thing that bothered Martin about the Colt revolver was that it had been found in the dead man’s hand. If he had been standing up when he was shot, he would have dropped the gun. Martin was totally certain that a jury would have found the homicide to be justified given the circumstances – his curiosity was sated. Those two youngsters had turned out well, one was married and the other interested in becoming a Deputy, possibly even a Paramedic. Sometimes it didn’t pay to stir the ashes. The DA had been satisfied so what the hell. Tom Henson had never been the source of a single call, other than the one where he defended his family.

◦

With another member of the family on the horizon, Tom and April had to adjust their inventory slightly. Mankind hadn’t always used disposable diapers. They were, April discovered, expensive and came in lots of sizes. Plain cotton diapers came in one size and were recyclable as rags or cleaning cloths. They needed accessories in the form of pins and a diaper covers. A search of the Internet revealed that doctors considered infant formulas to be the next best thing to breast milk. There were several brands, but they

didn't vary much. Before Gerber, people made their own baby foods so April held off on those. There was a food processor and a blender in the shelter.

Dean had gone all electric in his shelter. He wasn't convinced that the propane stove and propane powered refrigerator were good ideas. USS recommended against using propane appliances. He had persuaded Tom to replace his propane units with electrical units when they had the shelter open to hook in the connecting tunnel. Tom put the propane stove in his storage building and hooked it and the refrigerator up for possible use in canning and to store extra foods. They also had another problem to deal with – the barn was crowded.

“Where did you get your barn?”

“San Bernardino.”

“Can it be expanded, or should I think about a barn of my own? I have a mare in foal and you're leaving your feeder outside.”

“I think you should talk to them, but we might want to consider something different. It wouldn't be practical to expand the current barn.”

“Would you mind if I added another outbuilding to what you already have?”

“Heavens no. But that barn ran about 30 grand. Are you sure you want to invest that kind of money?”

“Maybe I could put in some kind of pole building. I'll talk to them and get some ideas.”

o

“Did you decide what you're going to do?”

“Yeah, I going with the same type of barn that you have. There are several reasons Tom, but first and foremost is the fact that April and you have a very nice looking acreage here and I don't want to ruin the aesthetics. If we had a disaster of some kind our animals would need protection. Those roofed corrals wouldn't quite cut it. By the way, did you run a tunnel to your barn so you could care for the livestock during a disaster?”

“It never occurred to me.”

“Why don't we put the new barn in over there and connect them to the shelters with some more of the 6' oval corrugated pipe?”

“How are you managing to pay for all of this? It's none of my business but you put quite a bit into your shelter and now an expensive barn?”

“Avis and I have been saving for years. We doubled our house payment and paid it off in 7 years. She always worked, you know. By that time it was second nature to scrimp and save so we started socking away money for the kids’ education. Garry didn’t want to go to college, even though we had enough put away to pay for it. I’m not so certain that Shelly wants to go to college either. The shelter and the barn are coming out of the money we put away for Garry’s college. It’s still an investment in his future, in a way. And what doesn’t get spent will go to him and Sam when we’re gone.”

“Go for it and I’ll help connecting the tunnels to the barns. I’ll probably need to cut a hole in the slab of our barn, but you can leave a spot when you pour your slab. Have you given any thought about who would be where if we used the shelters?”

“I thought that Rob could stay with us and Garry and Sam with you or Shelly could stay with you and the kids stay with us.”

“Either would work, I suppose. April bought some cotton diapers and things. I think she also bought some infant formula in powder form.”

“We probably nuts, you know Tom. All of this money invested in being prepared and no reason to expect a disaster. But I sleep well at night knowing that we have someplace to go, just in case.”

“Dean if we weren’t prepared, we’d be up the creek if something did happen. April and I have never regretted being prepared. That generator kept us in lights many times. We’ve eliminated the gasoline from our fuel tank and all 4 compartments are diesel now. We kept Garry in gas while he was coming out here visiting Sam.”

“You’ll need gas for your chainsaws.”

“True, but I would never use up 4,500-gallons. I put a farm tank back in and we have 500-gallons if we need it.”

“I didn’t see any new tanks.”

“Underground tank and it’s connected to the gas pump.”

“I’ve been meaning to ask you, how large is that stack of firewood you have?”

“It’s crept up over the years. I started out with about 75 cords, but it’s probably closer to 100 by now. We only use about 5 cords a year so there has to be a 20-year supply. When we cleared the 40 acres, I sold firewood and it paid for my barn and fence. We actually have very little invested in this acreage. We got it cheap because of the location and the timber paid for many of the improvements.”

## A Family Alone – Chapter 16 – Baby Paul

“Did you ever think about selling off any property? The way lots are selling these days, you could make a fortune.”

“In the market for a lot are you?”

“One of these days, maybe. It would be nice to live out here in the foothills. We could pay a fair price. Avis and I talked about a triplewide mobile home with the desert package. They had the 6” studs so they’re pretty well insulated. We’d be well off if we did that, our home would bring about \$250 thousand, maybe more. It wouldn’t be much trouble to commute to work, it’s only 35 miles.”

“When does Shelly graduate?”

“In June. That new baby ought to be here sometime in March.”

“Rob will be a senior and then he’ll be going to school in Fresno.”

“Studying what?”

“He was interested in being a Deputy Sheriff. But he talked to a couple of people in the Madera County Sheriff’s Department and they have him headed in the direction of becoming a Paramedic and a Deputy. Part of their Tactical Medical Response Team.”

“That will take a while.”

“About 4 years. He will have to work for a while as an EMT to get experience.”

o

“He’s a cute little thing, how much did he weigh?”

“Six pounds ten ounces.”

“As big as she was, I thought maybe she was going to have twins.”

“The doctor must have thought so too. That’s why he did the ultrasound.”

“Dean mentioned a while back that Avis and he were thinking about buying a lot from us and moving out to the country. If they were to do that, their house might make a nice place for Garry and Samantha to buy. I don’t know though, to get conventional financing, they’d have to have \$50 thousand down.”



“Didn’t you tell me that Dean had a college fund for Garry? If we could make up half of what they need for the down payment maybe Avis and he could get the other half from that college fund.”

“I’ll mention it to him. How much has Sam saved over the years?”

“I don’t know how much she has now, but she had over \$10,000 when they got married.”

“Hi, Mom,” Tom greeted Samantha.

“He’s cute isn’t he?”

“Looks like a little red prune to me.”

“Don’t tease, Tom, the wrinkles go away.”

“I guess this makes me a grandpa, huh? We’re not old enough to be grandparents. We’re only 44 years old.”

“Shush, Sam might not realize you’re kidding.”

“Nice little boy Samantha, what are the two of you going to name him?”

“Paul John Owens.”

“If you name him John Paul, he might grow up to be the Pope.”

“Not likely Dad, the Pope’s a Catholic.”

“That’s just a complication, some people claim Lutherans are more Catholic than Catholics.”

“I bought some Similac and some cloth diapers, do you need them?”

“I’m going to try and breast feed him, mom. Don’t throw them away. As far as diapers go, what do you think, I hear the disposable are pretty handy.”

“They’re cost you up to \$800 a child, before you’re done.”

“I take the diapers, thanks.”

◦

“So what do you think, Dean? April and I will sell you an acre for \$1,000.”

“That’s not much for a lot.”

“It’s just what we paid for the acreage, \$40,000 or \$1,000 an acre. The house looked bad and they didn’t include it in the price. Anyway, I don’t know how much money the kids have, but you could sell Garry the house for your asking price and you and I could make up the difference for the down payment. April mentioned the college fund you had for Garry.”

“It might not be a half bad idea, but I’d have to talk to Avis about it. If she’s in favor of it, we can bring it up to Garry and Samantha. What would I do, put the mobile home on a slab?”

“You could put in a full basement for maybe \$7,500 on a triple wide. You could support the weight of the home with I-Beams. You might need a row of posts or two, but the home manufacturer could tell you that; maybe even, the contractor who put in the basement.”

◦

“Avis says it’s a go. I talked to Garry and he’s in favor of it. We’re getting the house appraised and as soon as we know what its worth, they can apply for a loan.”

“When you find out, let me know so we can come up with our half of the money they’re short. It will have to be a gift because the bank will want to know if they owe anyone any money.”

“We already picked out a home. It’s a 2-story doublewide. That should make the basement cheaper.”

“Ought to cut the cost by a third. Did you order it?”

“The dealer had one in stock. We put a deposit on it to hold it.”

“Do you think they’ll have trouble getting a loan?”

“I talked to my banker. He said I might have to cosign, but that isn’t a problem. I think we’ll go ahead and have the basement put in. You want to take care of the papers on the lot?”

“Sure, but you’ll want to come out and pick out the spot you want.”

“Be there in an hour.”

◦

“Tom, it looks like the barn will be done in a few more days.”

“They’re very fast about erecting them. That’s part of the advantage of prefabrication.”

“Rob can move the horses?”

“Or, I will. Where do you think you want to put your home?”

“We discussed maybe that spot to the east of your home.”

“Right about here?”

“Perfect. What now?”

“I’ll get a surveyor to put in the benchmarks for your lot and we’ll get an abstract created.”

“I’ll pay for that seeing how you selling us the land for what you paid for it. I’ll have someone out in the next day or two. Got the appraisal on the house, \$240,000. Garry says that they have \$20,000 so you and I will just need to each give them \$14,000. I’ll use the same realtor to draw up the papers on the land, if that’s ok.”

o

“I think I’m going to get a nosebleed, Tom. That Dean doesn’t let anything slow him down, does he?”

“He does get the bit in his teeth. In about 2 weeks, we’re going to have neighbors.”

“That will take getting used to.”

“They’ll be commuting so we won’t see any more of them after they move than we do now. I told him they could have one of the lines on our T-1. Since Dean and Avis are putting the thin film on their barn and house and adding batteries to their shelter, we’re going to be totally independent if trouble arises.”

“What kind of trouble, Long Valley?”

“India bought those Backfires from Russia after all. We could end up with a war in that part of the world.”

“So, who are you going to vote for tomorrow, Powell or McCain?”

“Powell. I suspect that he’ll ask McCain to be his running mate.”

“Do you think he’ll settle for the Vice Presidency?”

“He’d only be a heartbeat away from the Oval Office, wouldn’t he?”

“Beats what we have now.”

“You don’t like John and Hillary?”

“Do you really have to ask? It’s been a disaster; Kerry doesn’t intimidate anyone. Thank God Bush got us out of Iraq before he left office. Can you imagine what would have happened if we were still there when John and Hillary took office?”

“Not really. We don’t have as many people in the military as we had in the Vietnam Era. Powell won’t go to war with anyone, if he could avoid it. And if McCain did end up in the Oval Office, I doubt he would either. That was the problem with Bush, he never saw combat. We need to get you the new pickup, too. What color are you going to get?”

“Flame red, the same as yours. What color would you call mine now that Rob repainted it?”

“Woodland Camo.”

o

They had given Rob the pickup on his 18th birthday when he’d gotten his driver’s license. Rob hadn’t done much to the truck except have Garry tune it up, e.g., clean the injectors, and then Rob had painted it to match their surroundings. Things had really changed at the acreage. Rob was graduating from high school and Dean and Avis were building a home. They now had two barns to house 9 horses and one feeder beef. Subject to Rob’s grades in his final semester, he would be going to Fresno City College in the summer. He needed to pick up a couple of prerequisites before he could attend EMT-B classes.

Shelly and her long-time beau had broken it off and she had enrolled in Fresno City College to get an AS degree in Criminology with the Law Enforcement Option. She was halfway through her first year. Of course being home schooled, the only girls that Rob met were the ones in Church and none of them seemed to attract his attention. Between the money he’d been socking away from caring for Dean’s horses and the money he was getting helping April, Rob had a lot of money saved. He’d brought up the subject of his possibly living at home when he went to school the following year. He suggested that he’d still have time to take care of the horses, even if he didn’t have time to help April in the business.

Tom had offered to pay Rob’s tuition for college, up to an amount equal to the gift April and he had given Samantha, \$14,000. Even with the state raising the college fees, the offer would more than cover all of his expenses. That was an offer Rob couldn’t turn down.

Collin Powell won the primary election in California. John McCain saw the handwriting on the wall and pulled out of the campaign. According to the polls, Powell was going to win with a landslide. When Powell invited McCain to be his running mate at the Convention, he gained 10% in the polls.

## **A Family Alone – Chapter 17 – The Summer of 2012**

Rob's graduation was well attended. Tom and April were there, Garry, Samantha and Paul were there and Dean, Avis and Shelly were there. They had a barbeque at the acreage after the ceremony. Dean asked Rob if he could still care for the horses, the commuting didn't leave him a lot of time. Rob told Dean no problem and after the barbeque Garry, Sam, Shelly and Rob went riding. Rob hadn't really gotten to know Shelly, probably because she was a year older, thus the 'older woman'. It turned out that Shelly was thinking about become a Deputy Sheriff, either with Fresno or Madera County. Her goal was Deputy II.

During the summer of 2012, Rob got his prerequisites out of the way and was set to enroll in EMT-B class in the fall. It was a fairly short program and from there, he had a job lined up in Madera working for an ambulance company. Assuming he passed, of course. But why shouldn't he, he had a 3.75 GPA? Not bad for someone who had been home schooled and had worked at 2 jobs the entire time.

During the summer, Long Valley had a few small swarms. That didn't concern Tom and Dean nearly as much as the building situation in the Kashmir region. India and Pakistan were at it once more. The former President of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf had been deposed by a military faction and the new self-declared leader of the Country, some Colonel no one had ever heard of was far more militant than Musharraf.

The CIA World Fact book still said, "recent talks and confidence-building measures have begun to defuse tensions over Kashmir, site of the world's largest and most militarized territorial dispute with portions under the de facto administration of China (Aksai Chin), India (Jammu and Kashmir), and Pakistan (Azad Kashmir and Northern Areas); UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) has maintained a small group of peacekeepers since 1949; India does not recognize Pakistan's ceding historic Kashmir lands to China in 1964; in 2004, India and Pakistan instituted a cease fire in the Kashmir, and in 2005 restored bus service across the highly militarized Line of Control."

"Pakistan has taken its dispute on the impact and benefits of India's building the Baglihar dam on the Chenab River in Jammu and Kashmir to the World Bank for arbitration and in general the two states still dispute Indus River water sharing; to defuse tensions and prepare for discussions on a maritime boundary, India and Pakistan resurveyed a portion of the disputed Sir Creek estuary at the mouth of the Rann of Kutch in 2004; Pakistani maps continue to show Junagadh in India's Gujarat State; by 2005, Pakistan with UN assistance had repatriated 2.3 million Afghan refugees and has undertaken a census to count the remaining million or more, many of whom remain at their own choosing; Pakistan maintains troops in remote tribal areas to control the border with Afghanistan and root out organized terrorist and other illegal cross-border activities; regular meetings with Afghan and Coalition allies aim to resolve periodic claims of boundary encroachments."

The Fact Book was wrong; hell, it wasn't even close. Pakistan had stopped looking for terrorists when Bush had pulled the US out of Afghanistan and Iraq in 2007. Musharraf had been confirmed to a second 'official' term but dissidents within the Country had removed him after a few months and he was presumed dead. Because of Bush pulling American troops out of Afghanistan, Iraq and Korea, there hadn't been a single terrorist event on American soil since. Kerry and Clinton had used that fact to win election in 2008. As the US went, so went the United Kingdom. Blair was out, but that had long been expected. When the Tories took over Parliament, all of their troops had already come home.

Iraq, in fact, was in the middle of a civil war that had started as soon as the 'Collation of the Willing' left. You may recall that Tom was concerned about Iran. He should have been, Russia had gone ahead and helped Iran with its nuclear power plants and while the Russians got back their nuclear materials, that hadn't kept Iran was enriching its own materials. Iran had succeeded in building several atomic warheads for their Russian cruise missiles. And contrary to what Global Security had suggested, they weren't any bigger than the Russian warheads that the missiles were originally designed for. The Iranians had some help from a Pakistani scientist name Abdul Qadeer Khan.

If the WTC disaster could be attributed to an intelligence failure, imagine how cumbersome the system became when Bush appointed John Negroponte as his Director of National Intelligence. Then Colin Powell and John McCain were elected immediately replaced Negroponte with their own man. Several Bush appointees resigned and were replaced by functionaries who spouted the 'Company Line'. It can't be that bad can it? Well, if the CIA Fact Book was any indication, yes.

Both Long Valley and Yellowstone swarmed off and on during the summer of 2012. Geologists attributed it to a volcano in Alaska that had produced several notable earthquakes. There had been several tsunami scares related to earthquakes but nothing had ever come of them. The tsunami of December 2004 was still the most recent major tsunami.

For all practical purposes the world was at peace. The UN still had a small force in Bosnia/Kosovo, but it was being gradually reduced as more and more nations refused to send troops to the region. That debacle over the European Union Constitution has seen Jacques Chirac replaced by Laurent Fabius, a member of the Socialist Party, an as unlikely candidate as one could ever imagine. In the vote that took place among the members of his party on December 1, 2004, on deciding the stance that the party would take concerning the European Constitution, Fabius was the leader of the defeated 'no' camp. He went on to lead the rebel faction of the PSF advocating a 'no' vote in the 2005 May 29 referendum on the European Constitution, and was seen as the spearhead of the whole 'no' campaign in France.

o

Into the fall of 2012, Rob took and completed the EMT-B course, finishing just before Christmas. He only attended 2 days a week (M/W), leaving him ample time to help April. He occasionally ran into Shelly on Campus and they'd go to coffee. She expected to be a Deputy Sheriff by the fall of the following year. Rob told her that it would be just when he began his Paramedic training. He was talking about a new movie that was coming out the following week and Shelly said she kind of wanted to see the movie too. Rob said that that might just as well go together. He didn't consider it a date because they were friends. When you are younger than 30, a 1 year age difference sometimes seems like a lot. Later in life 3-4 years seem like nothing. They went to the movie and out for coffee after.

After Rob completed EMT Basic, he went to work in Madera and only saw Shelly on the acreage occasionally. She had started to date another fella and he was busy with work. About 2 years after they got married, Samantha got pregnant again. She was now an experienced hand and got the diapers around early, just after she got over the morning sickness. April covered Sam's Watkins business until the morning sickness passed and Garry and Sam were actually 6 months ahead on their loan. Maybe they wouldn't have it paid off in 7 years like Dean and Avis did, but they were trying.

Rob continued to live on the acreage and to care for Dean's and his dad's horses. In fact, Rob bought a couple of new ones, Appaloosas. In Europe, the spotted Appaloosa Horses appear periodically throughout history. The Lipizzaner Horse exhibited the mottled skin of the Appaloosa in the 16th-18th centuries. These spots still crop up to this day.

To North America Appaloosa Horses were introduced by the Spanish explorers. Their Andalusians often had spotted coats. Indians stole and traded them, and the spotted horses quickly spread northward. The Nez Perce Indian tribe of Oregon became sophisticated horsemen and selected the spotted breed. These horses were of an elegant race, lofty and durable. The spots helped to camouflage the horse and the rider, for the splashy patterns helped to break up the horses' outline and made it difficult to see from the distance. Appaloosas with flashy or unusual markings are valued the best.

Indians used the Appaloosa Horse in buffalo hunting and in war. The horses had to possess strength, speed, courage and intelligence. The white settlers called the horses "a Palouse horse" after Palouse country where Indians lived. Finally it became "Appaloosa." During the war Appaloosa Horses were the reason the US Cavalry was deprived of victory for many months, because the Nez Perce fled over 1,300 miles of rugged, almost impassible terrain. Afterwards nothing was done about these strong, intelligent Appaloosa Horses, and they were almost diminished to nothing.

Rob bought unrelated horses, a stallion and a mare. However, once he entered Paramedic school in the fall of 2013, he didn't have time to ride them. He also bought new saddles and bridles for the horses. Shelly had finished up school and was a rookie Deputy with the Madera County Sheriff's Department. One Saturday, Shelly saw Rob



grooming his stallion and offered to groom the mare. The mare was with foal and a little touchy, but Shelly talked to her and calmed her.

“She’s too far along to ride, but I need to ride my horse, do you want me to saddle up yours and ride along?”

“I haven’t been riding for a while, that might be fun. That’s my saddle over there.”

“I’ll saddle your mare, Shelly. Are you still dating what’s his name?”

“Rob I didn’t go out with him for more than 3 dates. The man was all over me. No, I’m not seeing anyone.”

“I sort of miss our coffees but with school, there aren’t enough hours in the day. How do you like being a Deputy?”

“I love it but my father isn’t at all happy.”

“Why not? It’s an honorable profession.”

“He’s afraid someone will shoot his little baby.”

“I’ve seen you shoot a few times. I don’t believe he has anything to worry about.”

“Flattery will get you everywhere.”

“I wasn’t trying to flatter you, Shelly, it’s a simple fact. You shoot a handgun very well.”

“Want to go to the movies some time?”

“If I can find a hole in my schedule, it would be fun. I did the 68-hour Pre-Paramedic class in Clovis and now this. It’s a difficult course designed to educate current EMT-B’s to the highest level of certification within the EMS system, an advanced life support (ALS) paramedic. It’s an extensive 1,154-hour training program will include 504 hours of didactic education, 170 hours of clinical internship training, and supervised field-training experience of 480 hours. After my course completion, I have my clinical internship followed by my field training. After that, I have to attend the police academy. If the Sheriff hires me, then I’ll have to attend the H&K Specialized Tactical Medical Training Program. I want to be a member of the Sheriff’s Tactical Medical Response Team.”

“That’s very ambitious.”

“I started out wanting to be a Deputy like you are. Then, Detective Martin referred me to Deputy Dan Jackson and I got interested in his program.”

“Martin retired, but Jackson is still there.”

“Really, where did Martin go?”

“Fishing, I think. How did you know Detective Martin?”

“We had a shooting a few years back. Our father molested Sam. He was convicted but he escaped from jail and ended up on the acreage. Tom had to shoot him to protect us. I suppose that’s when I became interested in becoming a Deputy Sheriff.”

“Your dad killed your father?”

“My father said he had a gun and Tom didn’t have a choice.”

“And neither Sam nor you have any hard feelings towards Tom?”

“My father molested Sam and beat me up several times. I’m just sorry it had to be Tom instead of a Deputy who shot him. The Deputies got held up and didn’t arrive until about 3 minutes after the shooting.”

“We’re back.”

“Hey thanks for riding with me Shelly.”

“Anytime you want to go riding again, just give me a holler. And don’t forget that we have sort of a date to go to the movies.”

◦

“Riding with Shelly, huh?”

“I needed to exercise my horse.”

“You ought to take her to the movies or something.”

“Mom, we sort of made a date to go to the movies when I can find time.”

“Rob, you need to make time. Shelly is a very nice young lady.”

“Right, she comes complete with her own badge and gun.”

## **A Family Alone – Chapter 18 – Full Fledged Paramedic**

“Did you ever just stop and look at her, Rob? Shelly is very attractive.”

“I noticed.”

Although both Yellowstone and Long Valley rumbled the summer of 2012 and again the summer of 2013, and most times in between, neither looked like they were going to erupt. If anything were going to explode, it might be the India-Pakistan dispute; or, Iran. Russia had accused Iran of producing ‘vast quantities’ of enriched uranium and extracting plutonium to build bombs. The IAEA more or less said, ‘we told you so’. The UN was becoming a totally ineffective body, not that they’d been worth a damn after the Korean police action ended.

North Korea had apparently disarmed, again, according to the IAEA. For all of its fumbles, under President Powell and Vice President McCain, the intelligence community was getting its act together, albeit slowly. Of major concern was that fact that North Korea still possessed ICBMs. Some of them had been sold to Iran. Only a dozen, but the intelligence community was estimating that Iran had enough nuclear material to produce as many as 30 nuclear weapons.

Iran had 12 ICBM’s and 12 Russian cruise missiles all armed with nuclear warheads. Iran also had 6 nuclear bombs. In the interim, Israel hadn’t ever admitted that it had nuclear weapons, but current estimates put their total at 700. Apparently Israel had equipped all of their Jericho II and Jericho III missiles with nuclear warheads. In May 2000, Israel is reported to have secretly carried out its first test launches from two German-built Dolphin-class submarines of cruise missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads. The missiles launched from vessels off Sri Lanka in the Indian Ocean are said to have hit a target at a range of about 1,500 kilometers [about 930 statute miles]. Israel is reported to possess a 200kt nuclear warhead, containing 6kg of plutonium that could be mounted on cruise missiles.

Israel has reportedly developed an air-launched cruise missile that could be operational by 2002, called the Popeye Turbo. The Popeye Turbo, with a range that is variously reported at between 200 km and 350 km, would appear to represent a turbo-jet powered cruise missile that may incorporate avionics and other components developed for the Popeye family of missiles. The AGM-142 HAVE NAP is a variant of the Israeli Air Force Popeye missile, which uses a solid propellant rocket motor. The Popeye II, also known as the Have Lite, is a smaller missile with more advanced technology. Designed for deployment on fighter aircraft, Popeye II has a range of 150 kilometers.

The reported range of 1,500 km for the SLCM tested in May 2000 is several times greater than the previously reported range for the Popeye Turbo. However, the Popeye Turbo is a poorly attested missile, and the open literature provides little information on this system. Indeed, because of the small size of the vehicle and the limited testing program to date, it is entirely possible that even the US intelligence community has only

limited insight into the capabilities of this system. There is no particular reason to doubt that Israel could develop a variant of the Popeye Turbo with a range of 1,500 km, simply by lengthening the fuel tank associated with a 300-350 km variant reported by US intelligence. At present it is not possible to determine whether the US intelligence has under-estimated the range of this missile, or whether news reports have over-estimated the missile's range. The longer range reported in June 2000 is certainly consistent with Israeli targeting requirements.

It is generally agreed that these submarines are outfitted with six 533-millimeter torpedo tubes suitable for the 21-inch torpedoes that are normally used on most submarines, including those of the United States. Some reports suggest that the submarines have a total of ten torpedo tubes – six 533-millimeter and four 650-millimeter. Uniquely, the Soviet navy deployed the Type 65 heavyweight torpedo using a 650-millimeter tube. The four larger 25.5-inch diameter torpedo tubes could be used to launch a long-range nuclear-capable submarine-launched cruise missile (SLCM).

Some reports claim there are two separate missile systems under development, the Jericho 2 with an 800 km range and the Jericho 2B with an extended 1,500 km range. The range of this missile is frequently reported as about 1,500 km with a 1,000 kg payload, but other estimates suggest that it is capable of a much longer range.

Following the launch of the first Ofteq satellite, scientists at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory reportedly calculated that the Shavit "could transport a nuclear warhead a minimum of 5,300 km" if deployed as a ballistic missile and analysts at the Defense Department estimated a range of 7,200 km for the missile, with an unspecified payload capacity. In July 1990, Steve Fetter, a physicist at the University of Maryland, calculated the payload and range parameters of the Shavit, based on data about the two Ofteq launches provided in the press. He found that if the Shavit were deployed as a ballistic missile it could deliver a 775-kg payload a distance of 4,000 km, putting the whole of the Middle East (and a large part of the former Soviet Union) within striking distance.

The Jericho 1, 2 and 3 are deployed near Sedot Mikha in the Judean foothills, about 23 km east of Jerusalem (and about 40 km southeast of Tel Aviv). The facility is located a few kilometers to the southeast of Tel Nof air base

o

"I'm finally done," Rob told Shelly.

"Done with which part?"

"The hard part Shelly, Paramedic training. Once I pass my exam, it will be official."

"What exam is that, Rob?" (The year is 2015.)

“The National Registry Emergency Medical Technician Paramedic examination.”

“Is it hard?”

“I assume so, but I’ve never taken it before.”

“After that what?”

“Police Academy. And if I’m lucky, a job with the Madera County Sheriff’s Department.”

“You do ok. The rookie year is a challenge, but with all you’ve been through you shouldn’t have any trouble.”

“Would you like to go out to dinner? I think a celebration is in order.”

“Oh darn, I love to, but I promised Garry and Sam that I’d watch Caroline.”

“If I can cover that, would you like to go?”

“Of course.”

“Mom, Rob. I asked Shelly out to dinner to celebrate my finishing school and she’d go, but she promised Garry and Sam she’d watch Caroline. You would? Great, thanks Mom. Ok, Shelly, no more excuses, I’ve got you covered.”

“Let me have one hour to clean up and change.”

“I call and make a reservation.”

“Don’t you need to get cleaned up too?”

“30 minutes tops. I’ll pick you up in one hour.”

◦

“Where are we going?”

“I made a reservation at the Elderberry House in Oakhurst.”

“Hey not bad, it’s rated 9 out of 10.”

“Then you approve?”

Shelly pecked Rob on the cheek. Apparently she did. Rob declined to have anything to drink; claiming he couldn’t afford to kill any brains cells until after the exam. Rob’s mare had given birth to a filly and he had bred her again hoping to get a colt. Garry had ad-

vanced on his job to a full-fledged mechanic and was working for Powertech Engines. The dealership sold and serviced a wide range of products including diesel engines, generators and dozens of products. Garry had received several raises and it appeared that he might be in for a promotion. Sam's Watkins business rivaled April's in volume. So much so that Sam had become a distributor herself. April and she had divided the customer base with April taking everyone north of Fresno and Sam taking everyone south of Fresno. Poor Tom was hauling a pickup load of packages every day and on busy days was hauling two.

The original herds of horses had been sold off and replaced with younger animals. Dean and Avis were commuting every day and getting tired of the drive. They were earning very good incomes and dared not quit although they didn't need the money. But when can a person ever have too much money?

o

It was a spectacular week. Rob got his exam results, he passed, and he completed police academy. Lt. Dan Jackson had a position for Rob, but he would have to do his rookie year 2015-2016 on patrol. After that he could attend the H&K schools and be considered for the Tactical Medical Response Team. It had been a long hard journey for Rob. He had applied himself and his hard work had paid off. When Shelly had given him a passionate congratulations kiss it had been full on the lips. There were no mistaking Shelly's feelings but Rob wanted to get his rookie year out of the way before he got married. Nevertheless, he proposed and she accepted. They agreed to postpone getting married until he completed the H&K schools.

It is said that *the best laid schemes o' Mice an' Men, gang aft a'gley*. Many of us believe that the expression is: *the best laid plans of mice and men oft go astray*. Close enough for government work. It appeared that Powell and McCain would get reelected in November. I've always wondered what would happen if, after the election, there were some kind of National Emergency. Presumably if the same team remained in the White House, there could be a non-public swearing in ceremony by a federal judge at the location where the Incumbent President and Vice-President were located. What would happen if they didn't get reelected and the winners of the election got killed? It didn't happen, but it is an interesting question.

The answer, of course, is that Congress would determine who the next President was. Then again the election results aren't official until the Electoral College issues its verdict, are they? For people opposed to the Electoral College, that might be an argument to eliminate it. The people have spoken with the popular election. Satisfied? Think back to 2000 and remember who won the popular election and who became President. (I liked Dubya; he was sorta in the Air Force.)

o

During the latter months of 2015, the year Rob became a rookie Deputy, the situation between India and Pakistan escalated. It would eventually be attributed to the new Pakistani leader, but it wouldn't really make much difference. It wasn't like nobody saw it coming either and the DHS had raised the threat level to yellow, then to orange and finally red. Each time the threat notched up the DEFCON level ratcheted one level higher. By the first of December, the US was at red and DEFCON 3. It wasn't readily apparent who fired the first shot. It was clear who fired the final shots, China, Russia and the United States in that order.

With the US on red alert, the duties of the various Sheriff's Departments moved into high gear. Leaves were cancelled; double shifts became common, etc. Garry and Sam moved to the acreage and Garry commuted to Fresno. Tom and April double-checked their supplies and those of Dean and Avis. Tom moved as much of their frozen meat to the shelter as they could store. They talked with Dean and Avis and got a list of things they needed to add to their shelter. It only took a single trip to Costco with a pickup and trailer to get everything. Tom had the fuel tanks all topped off, giving them 6,000-gallons of propane, 18,000-gallons of diesel and 500-gallons of gasoline. There was time to get more spare parts for the chainsaws and all of the vehicles.

When they both found a free moment, Rob and Shelly got a marriage license. A friendly judge waived several requirements and married them in his chambers. Rob had the standard Tactical Medical Response Team bag plus the equipment he normally carried as a Paramedic. (The contents are on the Sheriff's website under the FAQ's for the team.) Dissatisfied with those limited preps, Ron spoke to a doctor he knew from the hospital in Madera. The doctor wrote Ron 6 pages of prescriptions and Ron filled them from the hospital pharmacy, paying cash. It had taken him 4 consecutive days to get his money and Shelly 3 days to get hers. Tom called the coin dealer in Fresno and arranged to convert everyone's money into gold and silver. Sam did the same with all of their available cash before Garry and she moved to the acreage.

April temporarily pulled her website eliminating orders that she and Sam couldn't fill. That gave her time to estimate how much feed and hay they might require for the horses. She contracted their regular supplier and gave him an order, but suggested that she might be off a bit and he should bring extra. He brought all that he had and they took every bit they could cram into the barns, stacking the extra outside and covering it with plastic. On that final trip to Fresno, Tom also topped off their ammo supplies; replacing everything they had shot up. He had to take what he could get because there wasn't time for the dealer to order the Gold Dot .45ACP. The military surplus 230-grain FMJ had to suffice. They all know that it wasn't if, only when.

o

Iran launched on Israel and Russia; the Israelis bombed Iran back into the Stone Age and nuked Iraq and Syria for good measure. India and Pakistan had a full-out nuclear exchange with a few errant missiles landing in China. North Korea nuked South Korea and Japan. China sent missiles to India, Pakistan, Russia and the US. Russia retaliated

against China, as did 4 American boomers. Russia and the US didn't exchange nuclear weapons, as that really would have ended the world. However, the US did employ enhanced radiation bombs against Saudi Arabia and Libya.



## A Family Alone – Chapter 19 – TEOTWAWKI

Fresno, with a population of almost 1 million, attracted someone's attention. Perhaps you can't stop an earthquake with a nuclear weapon, but it was now shown that you could use one to start one. The San Andreas ruptured between Bitterwater and someplace in the Pacific Ocean north of San Francisco, perhaps due to the strike on San Francisco. The Cascadia Subduction zone slipped but didn't create a tsunami. And finally, both of the big US calderas began to swarm. They didn't erupt, but they were swarming. No one was around to issue a yellow level warning.

◦

"Is everyone here?"

"Rob and Shelly are about 10 minutes out."

"I sure wish they were here. I don't like this at all."

"He said that they were inbound Code 3."

"All of those fancy medical supplies aren't going to help us if he isn't here. I don't believe that anyone else has any idea what to do with anything more than a bandage."

"Relax Tom they'll make it," April suggested.

"Has anyone got a TV on?"

"We do," Dean said. "The country is at DEFCON-1."

"That's never happened before so I guess that means we're launching."

"We're here," Rob called.

"Shut the door, we're at DEFCON-1."

◦

The shelter shook violently but it only lasted a second.

"Earthquake."

"Like hell it was," Dean suggested, "I think maybe that was a nuke. It was just one extremely sharp jolt. An earthquake would have lasted longer."

"Who can say the 23rd Psalm from memory?"

“I can,” Dean advised. “Shall we pray? The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want...”

The shelter shook a second time.

“Damn, another one.”

“That was further away or a smaller warhead.”

“Here,” Rob said, “All of you take one of these.”

“What is it?”

“Just a little something for anxiety. We need to chill out a little and keep our heads about us. By the way, Shelly and I got Judge Stevens to marry us this morning in chambers. Sorry there wasn’t any other way to handle it.”

“The TV is gone.”

“Maybe it was EMP, Dean. We have another TV. It’s an old black and white, but it works ok.”

“What about the radios?”

“All of the antenna switches are turned to ground. Rob, did you get the radio out of your truck?”

“It’s right over there.”

“Garry will all of our diesel pickups run?”

“Not if there is EMP. They use computers these days to maximize fuel efficiency.”

“Spare computers are in a metal trunk in the basement.”

“I can probably get every vehicle running that you have the computers for.”

“We need to see what still works and what is shot.”

“The thin film roofs aren’t putting out any electricity. Other than that, we seem to have everything working.”

“Don’t sweat the roofs. Utah Shelter Systems suggested that they might not survive EMP. We have extras,” Tom smiled.

“A lot of extras?”

“Oh yeah. We can replace both roofs, if we have to. If we don’t, so much the better.”

“Let me go turn on my CD V-717. Wow.”

“What’s wrong Dean?”

“It is already off the scale. That must have been the first nuke and it had to have hit Fresno.”

“Dang, Rob what were those pills you gave us? My head is swimming.”

“A mild tranquilizer.”

“Don’t give me any strong ones.”

“Are you chilled out now?”

“Chilled? I’m almost petrified. April could you put on some coffee? Please?”

“Sam, you’d better feed the kids. There are some toddler meals in the second storage cabinet. There is also some formula in there if you need it.”

“Ok Mom thanks.”

“I guess maybe we don’t have jobs to go back to.”

“Dean, if Fresno took a direct hit, it could be several years before it can be re-inhabited. I’m more concerned about where that second nuke hit. We’d better pray that it didn’t hit the caldera.”

“What direction is the wind from?”

“The east.”

“What’s the effect of a nuclear weapon?”

“A 1mt weapon will generate 3,000R/hr to a 30 mile radius. The good news is that it wouldn’t generate much of an overpressure, probably less than 1psi.”

“I guess that explains why the survey meter is off the scale. Assuming we get around 3,000R/hr, how long for it to decay?”

“7 hours = 300R/hr; 49 hours = 30R/hr; 343 hours = 3R/hr; 2,401 hours = 300mR/hr and 16,807 = 30mR/hr. A maximum exposure level is 104mR per hour, but half of that would be better.”

“How long is 16,807 hours?”

“700 days, 7 hours and 2,401 hours is 100 days, 1 hour.”

“So what you’re saying is about a year, right?”

“Two, before we can go topside full time.”

◦

“Shelly and I are going to check on the horses.”

“Be careful.”

“We have a survey meter. What was that stacked by the barns?”

“The extra hay, covered with plastic.”

“This is one heck of a way to spend a honeymoon,” Shelly mused.

“I brought a blanket. Who cares about the horses?”

◦

“Was everything ok in the barn?”

“Everything came out perfectly,” Shelly purred.

“We fed the livestock and the radiation level isn’t too bad. What’s the deal with the hay?”

“Rob, I told him to bring as much hay and feed as he thought we would need. He just brought everything he had. It wouldn’t all fit in the barns so he stacked it outside as extra protection.”

The shelters began to shake moderately and it didn’t stop for what seemed like an eternity. It was the San Andreas Fault letting loose, but no one knew it at the time. While it was possible to assess their immediate situation, it was difficult to get any news. It seemed as if the second hand on the clock had slowed to a crawl. On the second day the CD V-717 slipped into its maximum operating range, 500R.

“Dean, did you get the time when the meter came off 500R?”

“About 1700.”

“I’ll put that into my spreadsheet, thanks.”

Over the coming days, Rob and Shelly kept a close eye on the horses and moved Champ to Dean's barn. The entrances into the barns were ramps, not ladders. Everyone caught up on their disaster reading, perusing the CD collections that Dean and Tom had. April finally had time to update their inventory of supplies. During the last minute rush to top everything off, she didn't have time. At that moment that's all she had, time.

The general mood was somber bordering on depressed. One prepares but hopes those emergency supplies will never be needed. Although Shelly wasn't a ham operator, she knew how to operate the radios and Sam and she took turns listening for news. Perhaps of all the people in those two shelters, the one struck hardest by the events was Avis. For years, she had humored Dean and his follies. Her entire family lived in the central valley. At Shelly's suggestion, Rob put Avis on an antidepressant, Zoloft 50mg QD. December 2015 passed into 2016.

◦

"What's the point to hiding in these shelters?" Avis asked. "Everyone we knew is probably dead and surely Fresno must have been destroyed."

"Mom, there's Paul and Caroline to think about and maybe before too long Rob and I might add to the population."

"And what? Bring up children in a world gone crazy?"

"It's the only one we have to work with. Where is your spirit of adventure? We'll get to do the late 19th Century over."

"Where's the government? Why aren't they out helping?"

"Mom, Rob and I are government and we're in shelters. You work for California, or you did, and you're in a shelter. Everyone who worked for any government, municipal, state or federal is in a shelter at the moment. Sam and I aren't getting much news on the radios and what news we are getting isn't good. It may be the end of civilization as we know it, but it's not the end of the world. We're better off than most people, we're alive."

◦

"Rob maybe you ought to keep Mom on those tranquilizers."

## A Family Alone – Chapter 20 – After TEOTWAWKI

“Shelly, they’re highly addictive; I don’t think that I should. Your mother will be ok once we get out of these shelters. Some people are affected badly by not getting sunshine.”

“What’s it going to be like once we do get out?”

“I don’t really know Shelly. This is my first experience with anything like this. If Fresno did get hit, most of Madera will be gone. Have you picked up any calls on the radio from the Sheriff’s Department?”

“No, nothing.”

“None of the substations?”

“Them either. Nothing. Bass Lake, Chowchilla, Oakhurst and Ranchos are silent.”

“The Office of Emergency Services was in headquarters. If we’re not hearing from them and none of the substations are on the air, I have no idea what to expect.”

o

Ninety days after the attack, Tom and Dean ventured out of the shelters briefly to survey the damage. None was apparent on the acreage. On their way in, Shelly and Rob had closed and locked the old gate on the road that led back to the acreage. The background radiation level was still too high to stay out very long, but lower than expected, running about 150mR. Dean went back and got Avis. Once she saw that the world hadn’t ended in the foothills she felt a little better. When the background level fell to 75mR, everyone emerged from the shelters full time. It was the summer of 2017.

The sky was overcast, seemingly permanently. There wasn’t any evidence of volcanic ash, so they assumed that the caldera hadn’t ruptured. The vehicles wouldn’t start because the fuel computers were fried and the batteries were dead. Garry had that problem resolved in 2 days. The livestock was let out to roam, all except for the beef. Once they dusted the roofs off and replaced a few sections of the flexible thin film PV panels, they were back to full power. They had used about half of the propane. A drive over to Mammoth Lakes produced two 3,000-gallon delivery vehicles. They filled the tanks back up and refilled the one truck they’d emptied. If they didn’t have to run the generators often, they had enough propane for a long time. It was very cold outside and there was a lot of snow. Tom borrowed a Cal Trans snowplow and cleared the road down to 41. He also plowed a path to the stack of firewood and they moved several cords to their front porches for convenience.

“This is very much better, I hated being in that shelter.”

“I guess we got our money’s worth on those, didn’t we?”

“We did, Dean. It was provincial that Avis and you moved to the acreage. I wonder if there is anything left of Fresno or Madera.”

“We can wait until later to find out.”

“I don’t see the need to do that. That would be like pointing an arrow right at this place and hanging out an invitation. I do wonder how many people died, however.”

“NPR is back on the air. Powell says that the US didn’t get hit as badly as it could have. They hit some military targets and a few large cities. I suppose that we got hit because Fresno is bigger than Sacramento. That neutralized much of the central valley. We’ll want to do something about security once the roads begin to open. We have weapons and 2 Deputy Sheriff’s in the family. Plus Rob’s a Paramedic. We’re better off than most.”

“Is Avis snapping out of her doom and gloom?”

“The antidepressant that Rob gave her seem to be helping. I believe that warmer weather and more sunshine will help too.”

“Were you as surprised about Rob and Shelly as I was?”

“Yes and no. They’d been seeing each other on and off. Coffee, movies, dinners and riding together for some time plus Shelly helped him some with his mare when the mare was with foal. I think Rob was slower to be attracted to Shelly than vice versa. They do make a nice looking couple.”

“April’s ecstatic. They didn’t get all of the usual wedding gifts or a honeymoon, but maybe later we can do something for them.”

“Yeah like baby sit their kids when they finally go on their honeymoon,” Dean chuckled.

“Different world than it was last Thanksgiving.”

“Maybe starting over as we must, things will be better.”

“I wouldn’t count on that if I were you. The world may change, but people never do.”

“A note of cynicism?”

“Fought in the First Gulf War. It gives a person a different outlook about people.”

“I was in Just Cause. Not much of a war, but people got killed. I know what you mean.”

“How are we going to protect this place when it warms up? We have 4 men, 4 women and 2 children at the moment. The fence keeps the livestock in, but it was never intended to keep people out.”

“That was one of the things that were so appealing about April’s and your acreage, it’s off the beaten path. That paved road is an advertisement that someone lives somewhere in this direction. There’s that little bridge a couple of miles off of 41, we could drop it. That would keep others out, but I guess we’d be trapped. Forget it, that wouldn’t work.”

“It could work, if we did it right.”

“What do you have in mind Tom?”

“A bascule bridge. It is a drawbridge with a counterweight that continuously balances the span throughout the entire upward swing in providing clearance for traffic. Such bridges are either single-leaf or double-leaf. I saw one in Seattle once.”

“Man that would be quite the project. How would you put in counterweights?”

“We’d have to dig holes for them. We have enough pine trees to cut the lumber. I have that attachment for my chainsaw to cut planks or slabs. I’ll work on the idea and show you a picture when I get it figured out.”

“Might work. I guess we’re not short of time to construct it.”

“It would be a good time to cut the trees too because the sap is down. We could cut them now and drag them to the house. If we had some decent days, we could saw the planks. I have a box of carriage bolts in the storage building. We could assemble the bridge here and then take out the bolts and reassemble it after we got the holes put in.”

“How would you put in the holes?”

“Dynamite. The only thing I don’t have is a large piece of heavy pipe to use as the hinge pin. I suppose we could use another pine for that.”

“I saw some 6” pipe somewhere if I can only remember. It was stainless steel and had a thick wall, real high-pressure stuff. One of the junkyards, but I’ll have to try and remember which one.”

“We would probably need some ready-mix, too.”

“I’ll ask Shelly, she’s been all over Madera County in that patrol car.”

o



"I saw the pipe at American Scrap Metal in Fresno. Shelly says we can get ready mix from American Transit Mix Company in Madera."

"Let's go saw down some trees."

The two side beams were 40' long and 8"x12". The planks were 4"x 12" about 16' long. Tom didn't have any carriage bolts long enough to bolt the bridge together. They needed bolts > 16" long. They also needed a drill bit long enough to drill through 16" of wood. They needed to go shopping before they could assemble the bridge the first time. They made a very fast trip into Fresno, found the used pipe at the scrap yard and a pail of used carriage bolts with nuts. The drill bit came from a specialty store in Madera and they drove 2 ready mix trucks home that only needed the water to be added. A truck was parked on either side of the small bridge and they assembled the drawbridge. They used a backhoe on their side of the gully to dig 2 trenches 20' long and 20' deep.

After, they destroyed the existing bridge and put in forms. They poured the concrete on either side of the gully and waited a few days for it to set up. While the concrete was curing, they dismantled the bridge, transported it to where they were going to use it and reassembled it. When all was ready, they moved the new bridge into place and strapped the pipe loosely to the bridge. Finally, they started adding 8" wide sections one at a time to the counterbalance beams until the bridge was almost totally counterbalanced. It took one man standing on each of the counterbalance beams to raise the bridge. They added a section of a 20' extension ladder to each counterbalance beam so they could climb out after the bridge was raised. They added a heavy log chain to keep anyone from being able to pull the bridge down from the other side with something like a grapple.

o

"It's not exactly what I had in mind when I came up with the idea, thanks to you, but it appears that it will work."

"The only problem I see Tom is that the drawbridge will block vehicles but we were able to cross that gully and get back to this side. We need to keep people from doing what we did."

"I saw some used razor wire at the scrap yard. Could we do something with that?"

"If there is enough, sure."

"We need to return the Ready mix trucks to Madera, so why don't we make another quick trip into Fresno?"

"Do we want to do any shopping while we're in town?"

“I think a very quick in and out would be more in order. I’d prefer to avoid people if we could.”

“What are you antisocial all of a sudden?”

“Prudent. We can get Garry and Rob to put in the razor wire and we can start tilling for a garden. Keep an eye open for any livestock on our way into town and back. We could use a bull and a couple of cows to begin raising meat.”

“We may have to go north to find any livestock that didn’t die off from the radiation.”

“Then we’ll go north. It doesn’t make any difference to me where we get it and we can pay for it if we need to. We have all of our money in gold and silver.”

◦

“Is 2017 going to be a good growing season?”

“We had a lot of snow this past winter and it isn’t as warm as last year. There is more than enough subsoil moisture for this year. This year will probably be cold and dry and next year hot and dry. We may not get much moisture until the year after that. We may have to irrigate next year and the year after. We can use garden hoses, we won’t be putting in that big of a garden.”

“What about livestock feed?”

“We have enough hay for 2-3 years. We’ll try and buy grain from whoever we get the beef from.”

“And if we can’t find anyone to sell us grain?”

“Strategic reallocation.”

“Steal it?”

“Yep. Well, take it from abandoned properties, actually. If we can come up with farm equipment and seed, we can grow corn, oats and barley to make our own feed.”

Historically, Madera County was a lumbering area. There was a single mine in Madera County. The County is bordered on the south and west by Fresno County, on the northwest by Merced County, on the northeast by Mariposa and Mono Counties. Mono County is the home of a large geological depression called the Long Valley Caldera and several lakes and mountains. Mono County borders with the state of Nevada. Merced County is primarily an agricultural area. The eastern half of Mariposa County is the central portion of Yosemite National Park.

## A Family Alone – Chapter 21 – Security & Food

“We’d probably do well looking in Merced County for livestock and grain.”

“It’s not that far to Yosemite. We’ll probably get people out of the San Francisco area heading there to camp. Some of them could end up here. Have you thought about that Tom?”

“We put in the bridge and we’re adding razor wire. I don’t know that we can do much more than that, Dean. The acreage could support many more than the 10 of us, but that’s going to have to be a judgment call when the people show up. I’m not looking forward to shooting people.”

“Rob, you and Garry get some leather gloves and see what you can do about installing the razor wire on either side of the bridge on our side of the gully.”

“Are Dean and you going to help us?”

“We’re going to till the ground for gardens. After we’re both done, we might head up to Merced County to find some cattle and possibly even farm equipment. We have enough ground here that we should be able to put in 10 acres each of corn, oats and barley. But to do that, I think we need a tractor, plow, and other equipment. You might think about what you’ve seen on farms in the area and give us some ideas.”

“What about hay?”

“There’s enough hay for 2-3 years, isn’t there?”

“I guess so, yes.”

“Ten acres of corn ought to give us over 1,000 bushels, 10 acres of oats anywhere from 400 to 700 bushels and 10 acres of barley over 500 bushels. That’s a lot of livestock feed. We could plant alfalfa the following year.”

“Could we plant 10 acres of alfalfa and 10 acres of wheat?”

“We could try, Rob. That’s a lot of wheat, 200-500 bushels.”

“If you’re rotating crops, it makes sense. That much wheat would last us awhile, wouldn’t it?”

“Yes. The third 10 acres could be anything.”

“With all of the farms in the area, we should be able to buy what we can’t grow. There are all of the nut trees, fruit trees and so forth. We can grind any extra wheat and make it into pasta; it will keep forever if we dry it right.”

“You’re on the right track. Get the wire in and we’ll go shopping.”

o

“Shopping he calls it. I suppose the same rules don’t apply any more, Garry.”

“Rob, we have families to feed and defend. Who knows how long it will take the country to get back on its feet? In fact, who knows if the country will get back on its feet? We’d better be thinking about the various things we can’t produce on our own that we’re going to have to acquire to survive.”

“Like what?”

“Fuels, unless we can produce biodiesel. We sure can’t produce propane, can we? We don’t have any reloading supplies so we’re either going to have to acquire them or find more ammunition, eventually. We can grow most of our own foods, but some of the spices are imported.”

“Mom and Sam are Watkins dealers, we have a lot of imported spices. We can grow some things that we’ve never grown before. Things like chilies, beans and rice for example. It might be a lot of effort, but I don’t think we’ll starve anytime soon.”

“That’s assuming we can get the seeds.”

“Garry we have the seeds; Dad and Mom are fanatics when it comes to preparedness. Offhand I say your Dad is too.”

“Dad could only push Mom so far. She refused to believe that anything like this could ever happen. The only reason we have the things we have is that she humored him.”

“But she was right there on the range with everyone else, I saw her.”

“There was a whole lot of humoring going on. I think those pills you gave her helped get her through the crisis. Your Mom can teach my Mom how to bake bread and do a lot of things that she always took for granted. Be careful with this razor wire, it’s rusty.”

“Have you had a tetanus shot lately?”

“A year or 2 ago when I cut my hand.”

“They’re generally good for 5-10 years. We’d had better be careful though, I only have a limited supply of antibiotics. Oh, Shelly is expecting.”

“That didn’t take long.”

“It didn’t take Sam and you very long either.”

“It rained a lot.”

“Just remember if you go for a tumble in the hay to take a blanket.”

◦

“We need places to live, Dad. Could we maybe find a couple of singlewide trailers and tow them here?”

“Sure Rob, we’ll look for some. We can borrow a couple of new trailers from a dealer.”

“Borrow?”

“We’ll give them back when we’re done with them. When we clear more trees for firewood, we’ll expand the property a little. I don’t think California is going to care one way or another.”

“Dad!”

“Rob, think of it as the Taxpayers Relief Act of 2017. If we can grow more food, we’ll have more to share with other people.”

“Nice save.”

“Thanks.”

◦

“Someone is going to have to watch the bridge.”

“Why?”

“What if someone shows up?”

“Oh, good point. How will we know if they’re friendly?”

“I haven’t gotten to that part yet. I suppose we could ask them.”

“And if they don’t shoot, assume they’re friendly?”

“No, radio back to the house and get support. Then we could determine if they’re friendly.”

“What if there are more of them than there are of us?”

“I see what you mean. I guess we’d have to make them put down any weapons they have before we lowered the bridge.”

“And pick them right back up after we did? I don’t think that would work. What we need is a smaller, single-file bridge next to the vehicle bridge. That would allow us to better control their movement. We’ll build one after they get back from Merced County.”

“How would we raise and lower a single-file bridge?”

“We have the Warn 12k winches on the trucks. I think we could work something out. Do you agree, Avis?”

“I think you have it figured out April. I’ll feel better when the men get back. I can shoot a weapon, but don’t know if my heart is in it.”

“Think of our grandchildren. I’d kill anybody who threatened them, wouldn’t you?”

“I don’t want killing to become easy.”

“Avis, if you live to be 1,000, killing people will never be easy. When Tom had to shoot the kids’ father, he didn’t sleep good for a very long time. And their father said he had a gun, so what choice did Tom have, wait for their father to shoot him and hope he didn’t get killed? Tom had killed before in the First Gulf War, so it wasn’t a question of whether or not he could do it. It was a choice he was forced to make. We might be required to make the same choice someday.”

“If we had more people here, it might not be a problem.”

“I agree, but we’re going to need to be so selective. Whatever we end up doing is going to include some hard choices.

◦

“He said the cows were inseminated by his other bull so we shouldn’t have any inter-breeding problems.”

“Stop.”

“What for?”

“Let’s check out that Chevron tanker and see if it is full or empty. If it’s even half full we’ll really increase our fuel supply.”

“Rob, hold up, we want to check out this tanker.”

“10-4.”

“Well?”

“It’s full, and from the smell of it, it’s one tank of diesel and one tank of gasoline. Do you have enough PRI-G and PRI-D?”

“April went nuts. She bought 4 gallons of each. Then when it looked like the crap was going to hit the fan, I got even crazier and bought 8 more gallons of each. Do you have some too?”

“Not as much as you do. I have 2 gallons of PRI-G.”

“We’ll have to hit a marina. They usually have the gallon bottles to use in the house-boats and large boats. Can you drive that rig?”

“If I can get it started I can. Do you have a set of jumper cables?”

“Doesn’t everybody?”

“I didn’t, but when they started making announcements about the end of the world I bought a lot of last minute items. I’d have had more, but Avis really isn’t into this survivalist stuff, she humors me is all.”

Dean couldn’t get the diesel engine to turn over because the battery was dead. It only took a jump-start so they were lucky. Garry could only fix an engine if they had the parts and he didn’t have any parts for a Peterbilt. A few miles down the road was another tanker, both tanks filled with diesel. It was a later model tractor and they couldn’t get it started. Dean figured they could send Garry and Rob back with this tractor and pull the trailer back. It would increase their fuel an additional 24,000-gallons of diesel and 8,000-gallons of gasoline, a huge supply.

◦

“I need the two of you to go back for that other tanker.”

“I’m exhausted, Dad, can it wait until tomorrow?”

“Sure.”

“April, do you have a minute?”

## A Family Alone – Chapter 22 – Riding Shotgun

“What do you want Tom?”

“We need to get that trailer tonight. Will you ride shotgun?”

“Of course. Why didn’t Rob go?”

“Garry and he are exhausted from wrestling with those cattle.”

“Shotgun or rifle?”

“Whatever you’re comfortable with.”

“Where’s the tanker?”

“Near the Los Banos exit on I-5.”

“That’s 75 miles, isn’t it?”

“About that yes, are you too tired? I hate to leave it sitting overnight; someone could come along and take it. There are 16,000-gallons of diesel fuel there.”

“I’m going to take the 12-gauge Saiga shotgun and a couple of extra mags. I have my Commander as a backup.”

“I’ll take a M16 in that case. If we do have a problem, it is likely to be up close and personal.”

“What did you get for cattle?”

“Three bred cows and a bull plus a load of feed.”

“Buy or take?”

“We bought the cattle and feed. The guy told us that another bull bred the cows, so we should be in good shape. He also told us where we might get some used farm implements. He said he didn’t want the stuff and the tractor needed engine work. Garry said he thought he could handle it.”

“I hope so. Will it be hard for him to get the parts?”

“I had the impression that the parts were there and the guy didn’t get a chance to make the repairs before TSHTF.”

“Is that the tanker there?”



“Yes, I just have to cross over the median. I’ll get out and drop the wheels on the trailer, hook on a chain and when I waive, you pull the tractor ahead slowly.”

“Ok.”

Tom did all of those things and climbed into the cab of the dead tractor. He rolled down the window, released the brakes, made sure it was in neutral and waived to April. She eased out on the clutch slowly taking up the slack in the chain and pulled the tractor until Tom waived again. When he stopped she backed up a little to put slack in the chain. Tom got out of the cab, collected the log chain and tossed it back in the toolbox. April slid over and Tom backed up the truck, engaging the 5th wheel. He then got out locked the 5th wheel, attached the brake lines and raised the wheels on the trailer. As he headed back to the tractor a car pulled up beside them. Two men got out and one ran to the right side of the vehicle while the other headed for Tom’s side. April laid her Commander in her lap and changed the position of the shotgun to point towards Tom’s window.

The man on the left side of the semi got up on the running board waiving a gun. April blew him away in a heartbeat. She started to reach for the Commander in her lap when...

“BANG.”

“Oh,” Tom groaned. “I’m shot.”

“That SOB.”

The shot had come through her window splattering her with glass. Her Commander was in her hand, so she turned and emptied the magazine into the guy on the right running board before he could react.

“How bad is it, Tom?”

“I’m bleeding pretty badly, but I don’t think it’s fatal.”

“It will be if we don’t get you treatment. You could bleed to death.”

“Get the QuikClot ACS+ trauma kit. It should keep me from bleeding out until you can get me to Rob.”

“I’ve never pulled a load with a semi.”

“It’s about time you learned, honey,” Tom said before he passed out.

April applied the bandages. It was a traumatic drive home. Sam and Shelly were waiting by the bridge and saw April coming rather fast. They lowered the bridge and when April crossed, raised it back in place. April pulled into the driveway blowing her horn. Rob stumbled out along with the others.

“He’s shot. Fix it,” April directed.

Then she did something most uncharacteristic for her, she poured herself two fingers of whiskey and gulped it down before collapsing into a chair, sobbing. Sam and Shelly came into the house and asked what was wrong.

“Tom’s shot,” April replied.

Sam sat down to comfort her mother and Shelly hurried to assist Rob. Slowly April told Sam the entire story of what had happened. Reporting, not blaming.

Rob came out after 45 minutes and said, “I’ve got bullet out, the wound debrided, bleeding stopped and the wound sutured. I have him on 1 liter of Ringer’s. He’s going to be ok. I added a bolus of painkiller and of an antibiotic. He’ll be drowsy, but he’s awake. I’m sorry, I should have gone.”

“How could you have known? It was routine until those two guys showed up,” April replied. “I killed the two SOB’s that did this to him.”

If looks could have killed at that moment Rob would have dropped in his tracks from the look that Sam gave him. Ever since the night that Tom had killed the molesting asshole, Sam admired, even perhaps adored Tom. She only held out for the year before bringing up the subject of adoption for appearances sake. After the way she had initially acted, she couldn’t just cave in...

o

“Dummy, you should have asked me to go with you,” Dean chided.

“Dean it wouldn’t have changed a single thing and I’m fine, just sore as hell. April blew both of the dudes away.”

“Rob really feels bad.”

“Why? He and Garry were exhausted from handling the cattle. I thought about asking you, but hell, you were tired too. April wasn’t particularly tired, so I asked her. Turned out to be a good choice. Those two guys who jumped us might have been able to get that tractor running and we’d have been out 16,000-gallons of diesel.”

“From now on when we go scavenging, we’d better take 4 people. Avis and April talked about putting in a single lane bridge across the gully to allow people to cross. The boys and I will get that done while you heal up.”

“Hi honey, feeling better?”

“It hurts and my right ear is ringing, but I’ll be fine. Could I have a cup of coffee?”

“Are you sure you don’t want some broth or something?”

“Coffee, woman and be quick about it,” Tom tried to laugh. “Ouch that hurts. Black, please.”

“What are you doing out of bed?”

“I got tired of waiting for the coffee.”

“I was making a fresh pot. You knew that Shelly was pregnant?”

“Not hardly, I wasn’t there. Nobody tells me anything.”

“I just told you.”

“So you did. Nice shooting last night and that was smart having your pistol in your lap. Otherwise you’d have gotten shot before you could have reversed the shotgun.”

“You’re going to need a sling for that arm. Rob has some, I’ll get you one.”

“Thanks.”

o

Obviously neither Tom nor April considered what happened to be anything more or less than bad luck, e.g., stuff happens. Not so the other folks on the acreage. Rob was feeling pretty low; his Dad had asked him to go after the fuel and he’d begged off. Dean was feeling left out and that perhaps Tom didn’t think he was up to pulling his weight. Samantha perhaps felt that it should have been Rob in the Truck rather than April. Rob was a Paramedic and could have rendered aid immediately, assuming he brought his Paramedic bag. Paul and Caroline could have cared less; they had no concept of what happened. Avis may have thought that April couldn’t wait to make her point about killing to protect a loved one. Shelly was probably feeling bad for the position Rob thought he was in. It is amazing how 10 people can view one set of circumstances, most differently.

It was the fault of the Iranians and Pakistan and India – they started World War III. None of the civilian population had any idea who bombed whom. Well, they probably figured that it was the Israelis who took out the Middle East, assuming they knew. Not entirely,

the US popped a couple of enemies while they had planes in the air. There was nothing accidental about the US attacks either. It isn't like the B-2s were sitting around loaded with neutron bombs waiting for someone to start something. There wasn't any need for that; the US had 2,688 warheads on their boomers – more deployed nuclear weapons than any nation in the world. And I didn't even count the land-based missiles. WW III was just as everyone had predicated, there weren't any winners, only losers.

Did you notice who escaped attacks in the Middle East? Afghanistan, maybe, it depended on how accurate the Indian weapons were. Egypt, Lebanon, and Turkey escaped plus all of those little Muslim countries and Emirates. Maybe no bombs, but they probably got a lot of radioactive fallout. Europe no doubt had a Nuclear Winter even though they never fired a shot. And odds favored Canada and Mexico getting a little fallout.

o

How long does it take to heal up from a bullet to your upper right arm? Six weeks? Eight? Someone else was going to have to hoe the garden. Plus they needed that farm equipment from Merced County. The farm equipment surely would include a tractor or two, plow, disc, drag, wagons, mower, manure spreader, combine with a corn head and a grain head, a hammer mill and maybe a baler. Maybe some chickens and a few head of hogs, hams and bacon are a pig thing. In addition, there would be some scavenging to do, for ammo, coffee, toilet paper, feminine hygiene products, clothing and possibly cigarettes, just to name a few odds and ends. Also at least 2 mobile homes either 14' x 70' or 16' x 84'. Plus feed supplements to add to the corn and oats. It all had to be completed despite the gloomy weather, and the sooner the better.

That second trip to Merced County to get the farm machinery produced a bonus. The bonus came in the form a couple with a small child. Hauling a lowboy with their new tractor, Dean and the others found the farm that they had been told about. It was apparently abandoned from its appearance. However in the machine shed was a man working on the disabled tractor. Dean approached the man with his SPAS-15 held low.

“Is this your farm? We understood it was abandoned.”

“My wife, son and I live here mister, don't shoot.”

“By live here do you mean you worked for the fella that owns the place?”

“No sir. We're from Fresno. We were on our way out of the area when the bombs or whatever fell. We saw this abandoned farm and stayed in the basement. I decided to see if I could get this tractor to run so I could plow an area for a garden.”

## A Family Alone – Chapter 23 – The Cortez Family

“What’s your name?”

“Manny Cortez. My wife’s name is Salina and our son is Paulo.”

“Do you have a gun Manny?”

“Just that .22 rifle over there by the door.”

“We came after the farm machinery, Manny. We’re from the Hildreth area, do you know it?”

“North of Fresno on 41? I’ve been by there once or twice on my way to Oakhurst.”

“What did you do for a living?”

“Farm laborer. Salina cleaned rooms at a motel until Paulo came.”

“Hey Garry, take a look at this tractor and tell me what you think.”

“Hi, I’m Garry,” Garry said to Manny.

“Not bad, he’s almost done with the repairs. Maybe an hour to finish up and then we could probably fire it up. You want me to finish it?”

“Go ahead. Manny, why don’t you introduce us to your family? Garry will finish the tractor and I might have a proposition for you.”

“What kind of proposition?”

“We live on an acreage, we’re short of people and don’t know much about farming. I’ll set my shotgun next to your rifle, we wouldn’t want to upset your wife.”

Manny grinned. He figured the gringo was going to shoot him. Manny and Salina were legal immigrants to the United States. They had been in Fresno for about 4 years and had worked hard to get ahead in their adopted homeland. Paulo was about 1 year old. They’d been lucky finding this farm; there were canned goods in the basement and camping equipment. Whoever lived here before had bolted and left behind everything. Uncertain how long they had to stay under cover, they had only come out when they realized that the food was running low.

“My name is Dean Owens, Manny. Garry is my son. The other fellow is Rob Henson. He was a Deputy Sheriff with Madera County and is a Paramedic.”

“Salina, this man is Dean Owens. Mr. Owens, my wife Salina and son Paulo.”

“Dean is fine, Mrs. Cortez. I was suggesting to your husband that you folks might want to move to our acreage.”

“Que?”

Manny explained in a flurry of Spanish and Salina broke into a big grin. Her English wasn't as fluent as Manny's, but she could understand if you spoke slowly. (Nice name, Salina. It could refer to a horse, a Hispanic singer (Selena) and now a Hispanic housewife. Plus, I know how to spell it.)

◦

“It's running. We'll use it to haul everything to the lowboy and begin loading. There's some seed stacked in the machine shed, corn, I think.”

“Manny are there any other tractors?”

“An old Ford they probably used to pull wagons. It's out of gas, but it ran.”

“There are a couple of jerry cans of gas in the back of the semi. Rob, you want to see if you can get the Ford to run?”

“I'll do it, if it's ok,” Manny offered.

“Manny, here's a list of what we're looking for. What of the equipment on the list have you seen on the farm?”

“He had an old pull combine and a mounted row crop corn picker. I didn't see a hammer mill. It won't all fit on that trailer, though.”

“How many trips to haul it all?”

“Three, maybe four.”

“Would you and your wife be interested in moving back to the Fresno area?”

“If you take the equipment, I won't be able to farm. Sí. Yes.”

◦

“You and your family can stay with Avis and me, Manny. Once we get the farm equipment, we'll be pulling in some mobile homes and setting them up. Then we'll be doing some salvaging operations. When you're settled, I'll introduce you to everyone else.”

“What do you know of this fella and his wife, Dean?”

“Not a lot, Tom. They say they’re legal Mexican immigrants. He was a farm worker and she cleaned motels before she had her baby. Garry said that Manny wasn’t a half bad mechanic. Salina pitched right in and helped Avis clean up. Rob checked them over and said that they were healthy. If he worked as a farm laborer, he probably knows how to use most of that equipment.”

“What did we come up short?”

“A hammer mill. We got 8 bags of seed corn, though. How is your arm coming?”

“I won’t be much help for a while, but it itches so it’s starting to heal.”

“We have to make two more trips for the rest of the equipment. We’ll try to spot a hammer mill and some mobile homes.”

o

“It’s healing nicely, Dad.”

“Can I lose the sling?”

“Give it another week. We have all of the farm equipment here, including a new hammer mill. We’ll be bringing in 6 mobile homes we found, 2 at a time.”

“Someone is going to need to grade a level spot to set them up.”

“Manny is doing that. They are a nice couple. Those stumps we left haven’t all rotted out yet, we may have to dig some of them out.”

“What the deal on the mobile homes? Are we going to need to do a lot of conversions?”

“They had propane stoves, furnaces and hot water heaters. They also had fireplaces. Dean suggested that we replace the fireplaces with some of those high efficiency stoves and not use the furnaces.”

“How is Avis doing?”

“Good. I’m going to keep her on the Zolofit until I start to run low and then taper her off.”

“Still think we’re stealing?”

“We aren’t taking things from people. I guess I can live with it. You knew that Shelly is expecting?”

“Old news. What the background radiation level like, I haven’t looked lately?”

“50mR and still coming down.”

“They must have used a clean weapon or an airburst.”

“There isn’t much of a crater so maybe the latter, it flattened Fresno. There are some survivors. All the people who got too much radiation died and they cleaned up portions of the city and buried them in a mass grave. I’ve got to go. You take it easy on that arm and let it heal.”

“Hi Daddy, how are you feeling?”

“Not bad Sam, what’s new?”

“Well... Garry and I talked it over and since we’re going to be doing a lot of things by hand in the future, we decided to have another baby. Shelly is expecting too.”

“It’s ironic Sam. Nobody told me about Shelly at first and after your mom told me, everyone has told me.”

o

A week later, Tom had stopped using the sling. He had strapped on a Vaquero, but as sore as his arm was probably couldn’t use it. The new mobile homes had been moved, leveled and hooked up. Dean and the others were in the process of replacing the fireplaces with high efficiency stoves. Garry, Rob and Manny had moved into the mobile homes. They still had to do something about plumbing in the propane but for now they were using cylinders of bottle gas. Manny was keeping the garden weeded and when he wasn’t doing that, removing stumps from the back part of the acreage. Salina was helping everyone clean their homes.

The girls, Shelly and Sam, kept a watch on the bridge during the daytime. Up to this point in time, they hadn’t had any visitors. They hadn’t been able to get any supplies from Fresno and had driven down to Visalia to get what they needed. They bought things there, because Visalia had come through the attacks in good condition. They also picked up some wheat, oats, barley and alfalfa to plant.

“Manny? I’m Tom. I’m sorry I didn’t get around introducing myself earlier. What’s the situation on the stumps?”

“Senior Tom. This is your farm, no?”

“Not much of a farm, 40 acres, but its April’s and mine.”

“I should have the stumps out of 20 acres by fall. You won’t want to plant any more than 20 acres, will you? You need room for your horses, cattle and pigs.”



“That’s what we talked about, 30 acres divided between 3 crops. We grow corn, oats barley the first year and alfalfa, wheat and something else the second year.”

“We can clear a few acres every winter gathering firewood and expand your farm Senior Tom.”

“Just plain Tom, Manny. I put my pants on one leg at a time. I’ve met your wife when she helped April clean house. Nice little boy.”

“Thank you, we’re going to have more.”

“From what I’m hearing, everyone young enough to have children is doing that. I understand that when Dean ran into you, you only had a .22 rifle, is that right?”

“Yes.”

“Come by the house when you get a chance and I’ll see what I can do to rectify the situation. I’ll let you have a M1A rifle and an M16. We’re going to have to find more handguns, though.”

“I got a handgun in Visalia, Tom. It’s used and in poor condition, but I got it cheap.”

“What did you get?”

“A Colt .45 pistol.”

“What’s wrong with it?”

“The barrel is badly pitted and the front bushing is worn.”

“I have a couple of new barrels and bushings; maybe we could fix it up. I also have extra magazines. Did you get ammo?”

“One box.”

“I can give you more of that too, military surplus.”

“Thank you. Everyone has been so nice. We are in a new home, have food on the table, everything.”

“No one has given you anything Manny, you’ve worked hard. Where are we going to clear the timber this winter?”